DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 100 180 FL 006 636

TITLE	[Summary of the Proceedings of the Second Meeting of the Committee for General and Technical Education to Assess Progress in Modern Language Teaching in Member States of the CCC.]
INSTITUTION	Council of Europe, Strasbourg (France). Committee for General and Technical Education.
REPORT NO	CCC-EGT-74-2
PUB DATE	13 Mar 74
NOTE	15p.
EDRS PRICE	MF-$0.75 HC-$1.50 PLUS POSTAGE
DESCRIPTORS	Adult Education; Conference Reports; Language; *Language Instruction; *Language Programs; *Languages for Special Purposes; *Second Language Learning; Second Languages; Teacher Education

ABSTRACT

This report summarizes the proceedings of a meeting held to assess foreign language instruction in member states of the Council for Cultural Cooperation and to plan future CCC activities. Progress has been made in determining the basic skills and lexicon needed for primary language competence, and it is hoped that a unit/credit plan will lead to coordination of media-based language learning in Europe. There was discussion of training language teachers, study abroad for such teachers, international language certification, teaching languages for special purposes, and publication and dissemination of research and information on language teaching. (CK)

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

ED 100180

Strasbourg 13 March 1974 CCC/EGT (74) 2

COMMITTEE FOR GENERAL AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION

Second meeting of experts to take stock of the progress so far achieved in modern language teaching in member states of the CCC and to plot the main activities for the future

Strasbourg 3 - 4 December 1973

REPORT

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY.

FL 006636

34.449
04.2

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

I. Opening of the meeting

The meeting was opened by Mr H L Beesley, Deputy Director of Education, who acted as Chairman. He welcomed the participants (see Appendix) and, recalling the letter of convocation, stated the aims of the meeting. 1973 had been declared a year of stocktaking and evaluation as far as the modern language programme was concerned: "the CCC has asked us to review the past in order to prepare the future". Mr Beesley went on to give an account of the June 1973 meeting which took stock of the modern language activities of the Committee for General and Technical Education and produced a number of suggestions for future work. (Report - document DECS/EGT (73) 44)

II. Aims

As has been indicated, this was the second of two meetings with the purpose of taking stock of the CCC modern language programme. Its aims, more precisely, were:

1. to review the modern language activities of the Committees for Higher Education and Research and for Out-of-School Education and Cultural Development, thus completing the stock-taking of the CCC's modern language programme;

2. to make suggestions for a "coherent, medium-term programme of action" for submission to the CCC, and subsequent implementation by its permanent committees.

III. Conclusions

A. Stocktaking and evaluation

An account of the modern language activities carried out by the Committee for Higher Education and Research (CHER) (doc. CCC/ESR (73) 89) had been prepared for this meeting by the Secretariat. A progress report (doc. CCC/EES (73) 26) on the research and development programme for a European unit/credit system for modern language learning by adults had been prepared by the Project Director, Professor J L M Trim, for the October 1973 meeting of the CCC's Steering Group on Educational Technology, and the 4th session of the Committee for Out-of-School Education and Cultural Development in November 1973. The report, being an up-to-date account of that committee's part of the CCC's modern language programme, was submitted by the Secretariat to this second stocktaking meeting. Professor Trim introduced his report and answered questions from members of the group.

./.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

The work on the project began in late 1971 when a group of experts was given the task of investigating the feasibility of a European unit/credit scheme for adult language learning, with the aim of placing at the disposal of adult language learners a multi-faceted learning system adapted to their individual needs and objectives, and suitable for use within a framework of permanent and recurrent education. This required an orientation towards language learning with rather specific objectives which school systems, in the pursuit of general educational objectives, would not normally adopt.

It was therefore felt necessary to investigate the possibilities of making available to mature learners an apparatus of language learning, diversified as to language, level, and special direction of learning - through the use of the devices of modern technology.

At the same time, it was recognised that there were likely to be certain languages of which a generalised knowledge, for generalised social purposes at a rather elementary level, would still be required.

A sub-group was set up, under the direction of Mr Richterich, for the collection of information on the pattern of language use, patterns of existing adult language study and of estimated national and individual language needs. This group is currently developing in co-operation with the Austrian Zentral Institut für Statistik a questionnaire to be included in the next Austrian micro-census devoted to establishing the use made of foreign languages by the Austrian population.

A second fundamental research project in progress is what might be called the "anatomisation" of language learning objectives by attempting to derive, from the structure of the social situations in which the members of a speech community are involved, the characteristic speech events and speech acts which are required of those participating in these situations. The language these people must learn in order to be able to participate effectively and carry out the speech acts required can then be derived from these actual speech acts. This work has kept a research worker, Dr. Bung, occupied for the better part of 1973. It is intended to hold in the near future, on the basis of this project, an intensive working meeting for the purpose of producing a document which will be a substantial classification of language functions.

Dr. van Ek of Utrecht has been given the task of producing a specification in operational terms of the different skills required for, and the lexical content of, a threshold level of language competence - which would seem an appropriate primary language learning objective of a generalised nature, and may be

./.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

used as the basis for large-scale multi-media courses addressed to the general adult population. It may also act as a specification of objectives for courses of all kinds and further, perhaps, for some assessment, and even qualifications which may then be comparable on an international scale. The next step will be to expand the different levels of linguistic proficiency and different specialised directions.

Thirdly, it is hoped that the unit/credit project will lead to increased production and possible co-ordination of media-based learning systems in Europe. A statement of principles of the organisation of such systems is being prepared, as well as an approach to a media taxonomy in the language field: what kinds of media are available; their characteristics; how they are best employed; their limitations; and in what way, according to different local circumstances, they can best be combined into learning systems. Work confined to the adult area affords freedom from existing learning systems and, particularly, from the institutionalised role of teachers.

The group is in contact with various media agencies which intend to conduct pilot experiments following the principles and pursuing the objectives established by the project. These agencies include the TRU (Sweden), the Austrian authorities, the BBC, the Deutscher Volkhochschulverband, and others. These experiments, in different countries and in different languages will enable the group to see how the scheme works in practice.

A colloquium of media producers and "consumers" will take place in 1975. At this colloquium the group will present a statement of principles on media construction and content analysis.

The group derived a considerable amount of concrete guidance from the conclusions reached by the June 1973 St. Wolfgang Symposium (EES/Symposium 57,9).

Little work has been done so far on evaluation and assessment as it was felt to be important that the determination of objectives should not be distorted by preconceived ideas on the inadvisability or impracticability of certain tests. The importance of evaluation and assessment, particularly for feed-back purposes was nonetheless recognised. This aspect will receive more attention in the future.

When all the stages of the work outlined here are complete, it may be possible to consider Dr. Riddy's recommendation for some European recognition of qualifications. Such a project could certainly be regarded as relevant to the question of equivalence or diplomas.

./.

After this outline of the work and future plans with regard to the unit/credit system, there were a number of questions, notably on the part of Miss Valdemoro Lopez (Spain) who asked whether the group had established any objectives for the training of teachers who were to undertake a teaching programme of the kind inherent in the project. Professor Flueckiger (Switzerland) wanted to know whether the group had made a list of priorities as regards aims and skills in language learning and what would be a practical aim as regards the equivalence of certificates.

In his reply to the first point, Professor Trim stated that the group had so far not devoted any work to the question of teaching training, although its importance had been recognised. The role of the teacher would be managerial rather than the traditional one entailing the teacher's personal embodiment of the language. As for the two other points, the group did not consider the collection of information to be of prior importance and thought it unnecessary to hold up work until objectives had been established. Equivalence and the European certificate could be considered once the system has been put into practice but these matters lay outside the competence of the group. The Chairman remarked that nonetheless this last point should be considered during the meeting.

Mr Jocher (Secretariat) spoke on problems of adult education in general in order to place the unit/credit scheme in its broader context.

There followed a long discussion on teacher training and educational needs. Professor Weis (Austria) expressed scepticism regarding the unit/credit project as far as his own country was concerned. As for equivalences, it would be difficult to achieve these in the near future, at least in higher education, because of the implications of numerus clausus. Professor Trim replied that the project was nonetheless very strongly supported by the Austrian Government. Mr Stølen (Norway) thought that the project could be of value in his country. He wondered what steps would be taken to make the results of the project readily available to course planners and media producers and in what form the material would be presented. Professor Trim answered that a compendium of the project papers would be published shortly by the CCC (by February 1974). Some of them would need rewriting or vulgarisation.

Mr Jocher explained how the production of software depended upon an assessment of educational needs and cost-effectiveness. Professor Ellrodt (France) asked about the level of exactness required when assessing language needs; he referred to page 6 of Professor Trim's progress report where it is stated that too narrow a specialisation could lead to a

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

severe limitation. Professor Trim admitted that a situational approach, if interpreted too narrowly, would be restrictive rather than otherwise. (The problem is dealt with on pages 6 and 7 of the progress report.) Professor Ellrodt spoke of the advisability of making use of the graduate students qualified to teach at a time when unemployment is rising, as is the case in France at present.

Mr Welsing (Netherlands) spoke of the dangers inherent in putting too much confidence in media-based teaching. It was the experience of the Netherlands that people must be brought together into groups for learning purposes. Failure to take this into consideration could entail a great waste of money on a teaching programme. A television teaching programme aimed at general practitioners in the Netherlands was deemed by its organisers to have had no impact at all.

There were short reports on the situation as regards modern language teacher training in Italy and the Federal Republic of Germany. Professor Baridon (Italy) spoke of a most unfavourable staff/student ratio in Italian universities and of the current situation in which totally untrained people were entrusted with the teaching of modern languages at the secondary school level. Professor Finkenstaedt (Federal Republic of Germany) said that although the situation was better in his country, universities were at present unable to cope with the training of teachers of English. He believed that Professor Trim's project provided a solution in that it sought to introduce more technology into modern language teaching.

Professor Weis then spoke on behalf of the Committee for Higher Education and Research and introduced the Secretariat's document on the committee's activities in the field of modern languages. The activities were seen to have been directed largely towards improved teacher training at university level, notably through the two Saalbach Symposia organised by the Austrian Government. Professor Weis commented on the recommendations of ESR modern language symposia and on progress made in member states. The members of the group were unanimous in stating that the institution of language centres at universities was generally gaining ground. Although the trend was to make languages optional, university students were taking advantage of voluntary courses.

A discussion followed on the status of language lectors, a problem currently being dealt with in detail by CHER.

The group then discussed means of providing language instruction for foreign university students and the ways this was being dealt with by the various member states. Normally,

./.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

a good working knowledge of the university's national language is a condition of acceptance for foreign students as well as of eligibility for grants. Mr Hoy (United Kingdom) was asked to comment on the extent to which CHER's activities in modern languages meshed with those of the Committee for General and Technical Education. Mr Hoy mentioned:

1. the 1972 Turku Symposium on "The connection between the teaching and learning of the mother tongue and the teaching and learning of other modern languages" (copies of the report were subsequently distributed);

2. exchanges of teachers (as compared to lectors);

3. the teaching of civilisation in modern language teaching;

4. national centres for co-operation with CILT, London.

On the whole it was felt, as the stocktaking was brought to a close, that the three permanent committees of the CCC had to a considerable degree endeavoured to pursue all the main objectives stated in Resolution (69) 2 of the Committee of Ministers.

B. Suggestions for future work

A suggestion made by Dr. Riddy at the June 1973 stock-taking meeting for a European Modern Language Certificate was discussed in detail. Mr Hoy, who had at the June meeting produced arguments indicating that such a certificate would not be in step with the present European trend in modern language examinations and curricula (report DECS/EGT (73) 44) elaborated further on his doubts which, it transpired, were shared by the majority of the group. Mr Hoy proposed instead the establishment of a Council of Europe Board for the Validation of National Examinations. Some members of the group however expressed doubts as to the validity and practicability of such a board. Modern language learning was generally for "internal consumption". It seemed unlikely that there would be any need for European approval of internal examinations, except perhaps in the case of a person moving to a foreign country to work in a third language. Professor Finkenstaedt mentioned that a European Certificate for Modern Language Teachers might prove of wider application. Mr Hoy supported this suggestion which he said might provide the extra incentive needed for modern language teachers in the United Kingdom to make use of the many opportunities they were offered to go abroad for in-service training purposes.

./.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

A review of the situation in the member states represented at the meeting as regards an intercalated stay abroad by prospective modern language teachers revealed that such a stay is compulsory only in a few cases. However, many states grant scholarships and/or loans for this purpose. Nearly all language degree students in the United Kingdom have to spend one or two terms abroad. Most Norwegian language teachers obtain grants or loans to do so. In Switzerland, such a stay is obligatory. In Spain, students show great interest in this matter. It was however felt that governments would be reluctant for financial reasons to make this stay abroad compulsory.

Mr Flueckiger brought up the linguistic problems peculiar to migrant workers and their families and spoke of the plight of children who learned the dialect used in their new environment and were then faced with a different language at school - as was sometimes the case in, for example, Switzerland. He stressed the need for some solution to this problem and expressed the hope that the project for a "European unit/credit system" would also promote the production of effective course materials for this purpose.

Mr Géleff (Secretariat) recalled that when the CCC decided at its 21st session (6 - 10 March 1972) to suspend most work on modern languages in 1973, in order to concentrate on a thorough assessment of results achieved on the subject up to the end of 1972, it instructed the Secretariat "to submit (to these meetings) its proposals for the restructuring of the modern language programme ...".

Having stressed the particular importance attached by the CCC to a concentration of its programme, Mr Géleff welcomed the fact that the first stocktaking meeting had expressed the view that it would be desirable for the future programme to be a co-ordinated one. This he interpreted as meaning that the new programme should not just be the juxtaposition of a series of unconnected projects dealing with isolated aspects, each concerning one level of education only.

The question therefore with which the Secretariat had been faced was whether in practice a programme covering the whole range of modern language teaching at all levels could be set on foot. The Secretariat had prepared no document on the subject because: (a) it considered that it would have been invidious for it to prejudge the conclusions of the stocktaking exercise by taking a stand on the possibility of drawing up an integrated programme; and (b) it felt unable in these circumstances to submit proposals properly so-called.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

In view of the above, Mr Géleff would limit himself, in a purely personal capacity, to throwing into the discussion a number of ideas which he hoped might contribute to drawing up the new programme asked for by the CCC.

A great deal of thought had been given during the past years to modern language teaching methods. Much less thought seemed to have been devoted to what language teaching was, or ought to be, aiming at. Admittedly, any knowledge was a source of cultural and hence of personal enrichment. The question was whether in today's society such enrichment was sufficient in itself. When viewing it against a more utilitarian background one might well ask whether the present form of language teaching in fact corresponds to the need for which it is supposed to cater, ie communication. It would appear that because it is not learner-based, today's teaching too often fails to provide the learner with the tool which he rightly expects to obtain: the ability to communicate.

Starting from the premise that communication is the final aim of language learning (as opposed to language teaching) it might be possible to envisage the minimum level of proficiency in a foreign language as the ability to understand and to make oneself understood in simple, everyday life situations. This could be a sort of European "common core". It had occurred to the Secretariat that the "threshold level" referred to earlier by Professor Trim might be used, with any necessary adaptations, as this common European core. Though it would be premature at this stage to pronounce on this possibility, the matter deserved to be carefully examined, the more so as a link would then be established with the unit/credit system currently being developed in the out-of-school sector.

Although only a small sum was available in the 1974 budget, some preliminary work could be carried out. Without prejudice to the content and shape of the future programme, it would seem particularly useful in any event to take advantage of the 12-month spell between now and the moment when the new programme would become operational to complete a taxonomy of modern language learning objectives. On the basis of this taxonomy it would be possible to define the needs which would have to be covered in order to meet the different objectives. These two tasks should be carried out in close consultation and co-operation with Professor Trim's group.

Objectives having been classified and needs defined, the next step would be to examine ways and means, ie the methods best suited to cater for these needs in different learning situations, including the school. Here again, co-operation with and assitance from Professor Trim's group would be essential.

./.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

It was clearly too early to suggest that some sort of multi-media-based approach could be adopted in formal education, but the possibility should certainly not be disregarded.

Once teaching and learning methods were defined, the all important problem of teacher training (or perhaps "animateur" training) would have to be considered.

As in the case of Professor Trim's project, member countries might wish to set on foot pilot experiments. It was to be expected that the assessment of the results of these and the lessons to be drawn from them would provide a most valuable feed-back.

Professor Ellrodt made the following suggestions:

1. Recommendations for modern language teaching to be combined with those made by the Committee for Higher Education and Research at its 26th session (6 - 8 November 1972) on the contribution of universities to the study of "Man in a European Society" (CCC/ESR (72) 77).

   In this connection, member governments should be asked to encourage the establishment of professorships in European civilisation.

2. Governments, ministries and relevant organisations to be invited to organise observer courses in other European countries for heads of modern language departments in training colleges for secondary school teachers and also, if need be, for teachers in primary and higher education. Such courses should take place at educational research centres listed by experts.

3. A list of all European bodies, public or private, that are dedicated to the promotion of modern language teaching to be prepared containing in each case:

   - concise information on activities and publications;

   - administrative addresses and names of principal officials.

   The list should be sent to all European universities and teacher training centres.

./.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

4. Information on summer courses and modern language teaching programmes for foreigners to be compiled (and effectiveness assessed).

5. Experts to be asked what is the optimum age for learning modern languages so that it will not be necessary at a later stage, in the interests of a future teaching corps with a correct pronunciation of the foreign language, to provide corrective phonetics for a minority, particularly since results frequently fall short of expectations.

6. All modern language teachers in secondary schools (and possibly primary schools as well) to be required to have a university qualification for teaching modern languages.

Mr Géleff asked the members of the group for their opinion on the teaching of languages for special purposes. Professor Weis commented that this was a matter of great controversy. University teachers of modern languages were generally of the opinion that specialisation in language learning was impracticable at least before a very advanced stage. He himself thought this was rather an extreme view to take; in his opinion it should be possible to direct modern language teaching towards subjects for student specialisation. On the other hand, it was a time-consuming, however necessary, labour to compile dictionaries for such purposes.

Professor Ellrodt felt that in cases where students already possessed a sound linguistic basis it was perfectly feasible to introduce specialised courses - as for instance in the language of economics, law and related subjects.

Mr Giglio (Italy) spoke on the subject of specialisation and warned that specialisms were so many and varied today that in a language course it was only possible to give a general hint of the directions involved. He mentioned the field of banking which alone comprised many different specialisms, the vocabulary of which would best be learnt in the field.

Mr Hoy suggested that the meeting might recommend that CILT should attempt a classification of material in specialised fields. CILT's Deputy Director, Mr Vaughan James, had evolved a set of descriptors which described extremely accurately attainments as evinced by those who succeeded in attaining certain examination levels. This descriptive technique should be applicable to specialised material for modern language teaching. CILT itself had published a booklet entitled "Language for Special Purposes". At the University of Bath

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

a course of "French with Engineering" had been introduced in connection with the Concorde project. A carefully classified "bank" of specialised material would go a long way towards solving difficulties of the kind described by Mr Giglio.

Mr Hoy went on, at the Chairman's request, to explain the role of CILT. The full title of this organisation is The Centre for Information on Language Teaching and Research - with the emphasis on research. The Council of Europe had made an agreement with CILT to act as a co-ordinator of similar centres in other countries. This agreement referred in particular to research in the first place but it was becoming apparent that other points - such as the development of materials - can be included in the concept of research. Secondly, the word "centre" is open to very wide interpretation in the various countries. It might be an official organisation, a government or university department or even an individual. Response by member states to this projected co-operation had been slow but there were signs now that real efforts are being made. If this meeting were to suggest ways in which CILT might develop its functions, the Director of CILT would be more than pleased to meet suggestions, as the money granted could be used for a wider purpose than that of pure research.

Professor Finkenstaedt mentioned the need for the publication of language teaching abstracts. Commenting on this, Professor Trim stated that, in his opinion, the most important single measure to further the cause of improved modern language teaching in Europe would be to ensure the ready availability to all those concerned in the member states of information on all new developments in the field. He went on to say that most of the recommendations made at the Council of Europe language symposia were as valid now as when they had first been made and that they could be usefully abstracted and published, either by CILT or in the AILA Bulletin.

Professor Finkenstaedt brought up the concept of passive or receptive versus active or productive knowledge of a modern language. This was taken up by other members of the group and was seen as being likely to have considerable bearing on the general trend of language teaching and learning.

Mr Baridon spoke of the need to maintain modern language teaching throughout secondary education lest the initial time spent on languages be utterly wasted. After a lapse of two years, pupils had already forgotten the foreign language even though they may have studied it for as much as four years. The importance of continuity in modern language teaching was stressed in this context; in this connection attention was drawn to the rather pointed recommendations on that subject made a few weeks earlier at the Wiesbaden Symposium on "The early teaching of a modern language".

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

APPENDIX / ANNEXE

LISTE DES PARTICIPANTS
LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

AUSTRIA
AUTRICHE

Mr. E. WEIS
Hochschulprofessor
Rektor der Hochschule für Welthandel
Franz-Klein-Gasse 1
1190 WIEN

FED. REP. OF GERMANY
REP. FED. D'ALLEMAGNE

Mr. Th. FINKENSTAEDT
Professor
Lehrstuhl für englische Sprachwissenschaft
Universität Augsburg
Memmingerstrasse
89 AUGSBURG

FRANCE

M. R. ELLRODT
Professeur
Université de Nice
Faculté des Lettres et Sciences Humaines,
98, Bld. Edouart Herriot
06 036 NICE CEDEX

ITALY
ITALIE

M. S. BARIDON
Professeur
Facoltà di Magistero
Università di Roma
ROME

M. V. GIGLIO
Via Anapo 6
00199 ROMA

./.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

NETHERLANDS
PAYS-BAS

Mr. W.P. WELSING
Op de Locht 48
KASEN-BUNDE (L)

NORWAY
NORVEGE

Mr. L. STØLEN
Konsulent
Forsøksrådet for skoleverket
Boks 38
Linderud
OSLO 5

SPAIN
ESPAGNE

Mrs. B. VALDEMORO LOPEZ
Professeur d'anglais
Institut "Lope de Vega"
Guzman el Bueno 80
MADRID 3

SWITZERLAND
SUISSE

M. P. FLUECKIGER
Directeur du Département de linguistique
appliquée de l'Université de Berne
Länggasstrasse 7
3012 BERNE

TURKEY
TURQUIE

M. S. GUNAY
Membre du Conseil Supérieur
Ministère de l'Education Nationale
ANKARA

UNITED KINGDOM
ROYAUME-UNI

Mr. P.H. HOY
H.M. Staff Inspector for Modern Languages
Brambles
Wood Way
ORPINGTON Kent BR6 8LS

Mr. J.L. TRIM
Head of the Department of Linguistics
University of Cambridge
Faculty of Modern and Mediaeval Languages
2 Sidgwick Avenue
CAMBRIDGE

BRITISH COUNCIL

Mr. B.M. LOTT (excused/excusé)
D/Controller
Education and Science Division
The British Council
65 Davies Street
GB - LONDON W1Y 2AA